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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR 20 MARCH, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 20, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

ZAMAN/SABAH/HURRIYET/CUMHURİYET/RADIKAL: The Newroz celebrations organized in the East and Southeast Turkey by the Democratic Society Party and the Organizing Committee turned into pro-PKK and Ocalan demonstrations. Demonstrators chanting pro-Ocalan slogans in Izmir threw stones at the police intervening in the celebrations and broke the windows of the businesses in the surrounding. Police used tear gas to disburse the crowd. Police in Sanliurfa apprehended 35 persons, and while no incidents broke out in Hakkari, where permission to celebrate the Newroz had been granted for the first time, Molotov cocktails were seized in various places in the town.

Istanbul: 150 thousand people who gathered in Zeytinburnu Kazlıcesme Square asked for a referendum focused on accepting Abdullah Ocalan as their political willpower. Abdullah Ocalan's sister, Fatma Ocalan, also participated in the celebrations held under tight ground and aerial control by 4,500 police and 500 soldiers. The Asrin Hukuk Buros, the law firm representing Abdullah Ocalan, read Abdullah Ocalan's Newroz message saying that the Kurdish problem did not come onto the scene with PKK, but there had been 28 Kurdish uprisings to date and that the last uprising had been undertaken by PKK. The message said that the Kurdish issue had been kept the agenda of Turkey for eighty years, and that if one tenth of the initiative undertaken for HAMAS had been shown to this issue, it would have been resolved. The message said that an amnesty general should be declared and the terms allowing a limited political activity should be created and the cultural rights of the Kurds should be recognized. Ocalan had expressed that he would do whatever falls on his shoulders to ensure peoples' freedom and that he did not want war. The demonstrators frequently chanted slogans such as: "Long live leader APO" and "Tooth for tooth, Blood for blood, We are with you Ocalan" and "We die for your freedom." Newroz celebrations started with burning of the Newroz fire under very tight security measures in Hakkari, Batman, Sirnak, Sanliurfa, Hatay, Elazig, Mardin, Bursa, Kayseri, Malatya, and Sivas provinces. The Viransehir Mayor; Abdullah Ocalan's brother, Mehmet Ocalan; the PKK's military commander Murat Karayilan's sisters and a large group of people attended the celebrations in Sanliurfa. Approximately ten thousand people attended the celebrations in Hakkari where DTP's (Democratic Society Party) Co-chairman, Ahmet Turk, called for a general amnesty and truce. The celebrations in Mersin were peaceful but the police had to intervene in the unauthorized celebrations at night.

ZAMAN: It is reported that many PKK militants, who have not been involved in criminal acts, have been trying to desert the PKK ranks and approximately 75 persons, mainly from the Mahmur Camp in Northern Iraq, have sought sanctuary with KDP and have voluntarily surrendered to the Turkish security officials at Habur border gate in the past year. According to the surrendered militants' depositions, there is a significant internal dispute between Cemil Bayik and Murat Karayilan over establishing their dominance in the organization. The deserters are hosted in the Barzani-controlled region of Suleymaniye. It is reported that the militants who have not been involved in criminal acts and surrendering to the Turkish forces voluntarily are being tried under article 221/2, without being detained.

ZAMAN: In a written response to the CHP Kirlareli Lawmaker Mehmet Kesimoglu's resolution, the Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu said 1,350 terrorists had been captured either dead, wounded or had surrendered themselves to the security forces since 2003. Interior Minister Aksu said 116 outlawed organization members had been extradited to Turkey under the international security and cooperation agreements. Minister Aksu added that 60 militants, who had enjoyed special training, had been arrested in the 2004-2005 security operations and that 5,750 organization members involved in domestic terrorist activities or had committed crimes in the past had been arrested and brought to justice.

SABAH/SABAH GUNEY/YENI SAFAK/BOLGE/ULKEDE OZGUR GUNDEM/EVRENSEL: Newroz was celebrated under tight security measures in East and Southeast Turkey. While the celebrations were, in general, peaceful in East and Southeast, some events broke out in some western towns.

Hakkari: Approximately eight thousand people attended the Newroz celebrations in Hakkari. The Hakkari Mayor, Metin Tekce; DTP members; and foreign observers from the human rights

organizations in France and Germany attended the festivities and danced the local folk dances. The DTP Co-chairman, Ahmet Turk, lit the Newroz fire and stated that they could disarm the PKK if a democratic project would be put into effect. A group that wanted to undertake an unauthorized march disbursed shortly. In his bilingual speech, the Hakkari Mayor, Metin Tekce, said "Kurds have woken up now. Nobody should think that they could crush the Kurds' heads. I would sacrifice myself for you for this end. All over the world, solutions are found for similar problems with understanding and tolerance to multiculturalism. I hope the year 2006 will be the year of freedom for Kurds." Batman: The Newroz fire was lit by the DTP's Co-chairperson, Aysel Tugluk, and mayor Huseyin Kalkan. The exuberance of approximately ten thousand celebrators (Hurriyet puts the figures at 15 thousand) reached to its climax with Kurdish songs by Rojin, a Kurdish celebrity. In order not to cause any instigation, the police withdrew from the crowd towards the end of the program.

Sanliurfa: Police intervened when the crowd tried to march and damage some businesses, and arrested around 27 persons in Sanliurfa.

Bingol: Approximately five thousand people attended the festivities that started at 9:00 a.m. at three different locations in Bingol. Ulkede Ozgur Gundem reports that the crowd in Bingol demanded that Kurdish should be recognized as the second official language of Turkey.

Elazig: Despite heavy rain, the Train Station Square had been filled up with celebrators who were entertained with Kurdish songs.

Mersin: Over 25 thousand people (Sabah Guney reports that 30 thousand people attended the meeting) attended the Newroz celebrations in Mersin where the Newroz fire was lit by the mother of Umit Gonultas, who had died during the last year's celebrations. The crowd frequently chanted pro-Ocalan slogans.

The Diyarbakir Mayor, Osman Baydemir, and some other mayors accompanying him, visited the March 9, 2006 explosion-victim Enver Tanritanir's house in Van to pay their condolences. Following the visit, Mayor Baydemir told the press that a great bitterness had been experienced and that they wanted to share the family's grief and he hoped that that would be the last bitter event this people would suffer.

EKSPRES/BOLGE/EVRENSEL: A group of NGO representatives, led by the Adana Human Rights Chapter, protested the Iraq War in front of the U.S. Consulate in Adana and demanded that Israel should withdraw from Palestine. At his press announcement on behalf of the NGOs, the secretary of the Adana HRA Chapter, Ethem Acikalin, said following the completion of Afghanistan's occupation, the United States put into action its plan to occupy Iraq. The group demanded closing down of the Incirlik AB and disbursed as they chanted slogans.

ULKEDED OZGUR GUNDEM: Following ousting of Saddam Huseyin's regime, students from many European countries, and particularly from Southeastern Turkey, have turned their eyes on education opportunities in Northern Iraq. As a consequence of talks between the Kurdish Regional Authority and Turkish officials, despite over 1000 applications, the number of students to enroll at universities in Northern Iraq has been limited with 250 for this year. The Higher Education Committee (YOK) has determined to erect a school either in Suleymaniya or Erbil that would be accredited with Turkish universities. Companies affiliated with OYAK (Military Assistance Organization, which owns many cement factories, and is also the co-owner of Renault in Turkey) will carry out the construction of the university. Turkey has been insisting that the Turkomen students should be given priority for enrollment at schools. Many students from other Kurdish regions are attracted with the scholarships sponsored by the Kurdish Regional Authority.

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